Arts Enabled

Increasing Access to the Arts
for People with Disabilities

Arts Enabled

Sponsors & Leads:
Linda Knudsen-McAusland, Seattle Arts Commission
Jesse Minkert, Arts and Visually Impaired Audiences
Joan Rabinowitz, Jack Straw Productions
Charlie Rathbun, King County Arts Commission
Rob Roth, Community Service Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Dan Schmitt, VSA arts of Washington

JSP

SEATTLE ARTS COMMISSION

King County Arts Commission

Jack Straw Productions

VSA arts of Washington

Arts and Visually Impaired Audiences

Endresen Research: Nicole Stein, Jeanne Wintz

Interpreters: Cathy Lubson, Jody Meyer, Mary Ming, Katrina Zubenska

Focus Groups Participants:

Lorette Aljoie	Brendan Huxtable
David Baker	Taylor Jay
Barbara Bernstein	Urja Lansing
Patricia Burgett	Barbara Larson
Wendy David	Bruce Moody
Danny Deardorff	Norma Nichols
Diane Farrell	Kim Noel
Debbie Gilbert	Bonnie Roth
Consuela Gonzales	Marilyn Smith
Carol Hahn	Tracy Watkinson
Randy Havers	Laurel Anne White
John Holsen	Karen Wright

Drawings: Dianne Laurine

Additional Assistance: Sharon Keeran (AVIA)
Amey Mathews (VSA arts)
Anita Montgomery (JSP)

Senior Editor: Joan Rabinowitz
Editor/Layout: Kent Chadwick

Table of Contents

Introduction

This booklet is intended to give arts organizations, artists, audience members, and arts access providers a place to turn for a greater awareness and for better understanding of the needs and issues of disabled patrons of the arts.

Access to the arts for disabled people is a question without one answer. People with different disabilities have different needs. Different approaches to solving those needs are necessary for each community.

This project set out to:

- learn from people in the disabled community what those needs are
- look at what is currently being done, what works and what doesn't
- gather suggestions for new approaches
- develop a list of resources

The need for a closer look at arts access became clear at a Seattle Arts Commission Community Arts review panel. After listening to applicants struggle with questions about access, panelists Rob Roth and Joan Rabinowitz, with Project Manager Linda Knudsen-McAusland concluded that arts organizations need better information and ideas to improve arts access for the disabled.

They formed a small group under the name of Arts Enabled. Participants included:

- Linda Knudsen-McAusland, Seattle Arts Commission
- Rob Roth, Community Service Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Joan Rabinowitz, Jack Straw Productions
- Jesse Minkert, Arts and Visually Impaired Audiences
- Dan Schmitt, VSA arts of Washington
- Charlie Rathbun, King County Arts Commission

Business Volunteers for the Arts enlisted Endresen Research to facilitate a series of five focus groups. Each group comprised members of a specific community:

- People who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- People who are Physically or Mobility Impaired
- People who are Blind or Visually Impaired
- Arts Organizations and Presenters
- Arts Access Providers

They met and were recorded at Jack Straw Productions. Endresen transcribed the proceedings. The transcripts became the basis for this booklet.

The information that follows is grouped into five sections:

1. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
2. Disabled Communities
    - Background on each community
    - History of access for each community
    - Issues and needs revealed by the focus groups
3. Seattle Arts Organizations' Responses to the ADA
    - What is working and what is not
    - Concerns of arts presenters
4. Arts Enabled Solutions
    - For presenters
    - For disabled patrons
5. Access Resources

Our goal is to begin to improve access to the cultural life of our community and to improve the experience for everyone. All of the answers are not in these pages, but we hope this booklet serves as a place to start. Every need has a range of possible solutions. Awareness is the first step.

Arts Enabled would like to thank Dianne Laurine for her elegant cover and interior drawings and Kent Chadwick for his editing of this booklet.

Please note that a version of this booklet is maintained on the Seattle Arts Commission web site (www.cityofseattle.net/arts/) and so is accessible by the visually impaired. If other formats of this booklet are needed please contact the Seattle Arts Commission.

This is also the beginning of a dialogue. Please send reactions, updates of information, and/or new resources, to the Seattle Arts Commission at the following email address: arts.commission@ci.seattle.wa.us

Or write:
Seattle Arts Commission
312 1st Ave N.
Seattle, WA 98109-4504

1. The Americans with Disabilities Act

The Law

The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed by Congress in 1990 and went into effect on January 26, 1992.

Congress was convinced to act because of the continuing discrimination against individuals with disabilities "in such critical areas as employment, housing, public accommodations, education, transportation, communication, recreation, institutionalization, health services, voting, and access to public services." Congress found that the disabled "continually encounter various forms of discrimination, including the discriminatory effects of architectural and communication barriers, failure to make modifications to existing facilities and practices, segregation, and relegation to lesser services, programs, activities." The approximately 43 million Americans with one or more physical or mental disabilities had "no legal recourse to redress such discrimination."

By passing the ADA, Congress established a national goal of assuring "equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency" for disabled individuals. The purpose of the ADA was to:

- "provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities;"
- "to provide clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards addressing discrimination against individuals with disabilities;"
- "to invoke the sweep of congressional authority, including the power to enforce the fourteenth amendment and to regulate commerce, in order to address the major areas of discrimination faced day-to-day by people with disabilities."

The ADA defines a person as disabled if he or she:

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities;
- has a record of such an impairment;
- or is regarded as having such an impairment.

Title III: Public Accommodations and Services Operated by Private Entities

Title III of the ADA is the section of the act that is relevant to arts presenters. It establishes the laws for eliminating discrimination against the disabled in public

accommodations and services operated by private entities. Public accommodations were defined to include, among other things:

- places of exhibition or entertainment such as motion picture houses, theaters, concert halls, and stadiums
- places of public gathering such as auditoriums, convention centers, and lecture halls
- places of public display or collection such as museums, libraries, and galleries

Title III's general rule states that "No individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation." Disabled patrons are to be served in a setting integrated as much as possible with other patrons and given an "opportunity to participate in programs and activities that are not separate or different."

Title III defined discrimination as including:

- a failure to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures when necessary to accommodate individuals with disabilities, except when such modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the goods or services
- a failure to provide auxiliary aids and services necessary for individuals with disabilities to participate in the goods or services offered, except when such aids would fundamentally alter the nature of the goods or services or result in an undue burden
- a failure to remove architectural or communication barriers that are structural in nature, in existing facilities, where such removal is readily achievable
- a failure to make the goods or services available through alternative methods to people with disabilities when removing the architectural or communication barriers in an existing facility is not readily achievable
- a failure to design and construct facilities after enactment of the ADA that are readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, except where an entity can demonstrate that it is structurally impracticable to meet the requirements

Meeting the Law

The ADA requires arts presenters, among others, to end discrimination against the disabled to the maximum extent feasible by removing access barriers and providing auxiliary aids and services.

The auxiliary aids and services required by the law include:

- "qualified interpreters or other effective methods of making aurally delivered materials available to individuals with hearing impairments;
- qualified readers, taped texts, or other effective methods of making visually delivered materials available to individuals with visual impairments;
- acquisition or modification of equipment or devices; and
- other similar services and actions."

The modifications and services the law requires are those that are not an undue burden and that are readily achievable. The ADA defines "undue burden" as "significant difficulty and expense." And the ADA defines "readily achievable" as meaning "easily accomplishable and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense." The law notes that factors to be considered in determining whether a modification is readily achievable include:

- the nature and cost of the modification
- the overall financial resources and size of the organization
- the type of services offered by the organization

The ADA provided for the creation of written guidelines for architectural compliance, which are available from the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (800-872-2253). A wealth of other compliance resources are noted in section five "Access Resources."

2. Diverse Disabled Communities

There are three major communities of the disabled, each with its own specific arts enabled needs:

- People who are deaf or hard of hearing
- People with physical or mobility limitations
- People with blindness or visual impairment

Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

The disability group that comprises the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing is probably the most divergent in terms of accommodation. As a member of the deaf/hard of hearing focus group said, "Part of the problem you run into when dealing with the deaf and hearing impaired community is that you have such a wide range of hearing loss, and such a wide range in understanding of sign language." Another said, "There's a lot of variety (in) hearing impairments."

According to a study from Gallaudet University, deaf and hard of hearing people make up approximately 10 percent of the United States population. This covers all types of hearing impairments. Two percent of this figure is considered to be persons who are deaf and use American Sign Language.

Deaf

The Deaf community considers itself a cultural community, and its common denominator is American Sign Language (ASL), which recently became the third most used language in the United States. For many ASL users, English is a second or even third language. ASL is a visual language, with no written component. A common misconception of ASL is that it uses signs in English word order. In fact, ASL is more like Chinese in structure and grammar. There is a strong bias towards ASL in everyday life, from living and working with others who use ASL, to socializing at functions where ASL is the primary language. Many in this group are pre-lingually deaf, that is, they were born deaf or became deaf prior to the onset of spoken language. Another large group in this community are persons that are post-lingually deaf, those that became deaf after acquiring spoken language. A much smaller group are those that are late-deafened, or became deaf in adulthood. A good number of the late-deafened utilize other forms of communication besides ASL, such as lip-reading, speech, and writing.

A complicating factor for the Deaf community is the different sign systems that have been used in America for educating the deaf. ASL, while recognized as a distinct language for over twenty years, was banned as a tool for educating the

deaf for over 75 years. Consequently, signed or manual English, that is, signs in English word order, is used by an increasing minority of the Deaf community.

Hard of Hearing or Hearing Impaired

Persons who are hard of hearing, or as some prefer to be identified, hearing impaired, are generally English-based in their language, and consider themselves to be part of the mainstream culture. A small percentage know and use sign language. A large number in this group are post-lingually deaf, with some that are pre-lingually deafened. The majority are late-deafened, including seniors with declining hearing loss. Some are embarrassed by any association with deafness or the Deaf community.

Deaf-Blind

A very small number in the population of hearing-impaired persons are those who are deaf-blind, that is, they are both blind and deaf. Even this group can be subdivided further (with the understanding that there is a wide range of visual and hearing impairments within these groups). There are those who are born deaf and later become blind. Such persons generally identify and associate with the deaf, because ASL is their common language. Then there are those who are born blind and later become deaf. Such persons generally identify with the mainstream culture, as they are English-based. Many, depending on the degree of hearing loss, learn signs so they can continue to communicate, using a tactile form of sign language. And there are those who are born both deaf and blind. Few persons in this category acquire language. Even with language, these individuals face tremendous barriers in daily living.

History of Arts Access for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing

Access to the arts for deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing persons has a relatively recent history. It was not until the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 that arts institutions began to look at their responsibility in including all Americans in their programming, with a few taking on a leadership role. Unfortunately, many of these venues still had not addressed access issues for this population as of 1998.

The King County and Seattle Arts Commissions, as early as 1991, incorporated statements of support for inclusion of persons with disabilities in arts programming within their applications for funding. More recently, these applications included specific questions on how the applicant organization would ensure accessibility to this population.

Current efforts in arts access to the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing include:

- sign language
- interpreted performances
- copies of performance or video scripts
- assistive listening devices (infrared system)
- open captions or supratitles (for foreign language operatic performances)

An unfortunate factor for access to this population is the ongoing cost of accessibility, specifically interpreters. While there is a one-time cost for, say, a wheelchair ramp to enter a theater, interpreters must be hired each time for an event to be accessible to the deaf.

A large percentage of adults who have been deaf for most, if not all, of their lives generally do not have arts experience or knowledge. This is because of a lack of accessibility to the arts during their formative years. For example, theatrical performances or guided tours in art museums would not be interpreted, often rendering these experiences frustrating and unfulfilling. Imagine, as a deaf child, going with your hearing classmates to a symphony orchestra performance, and being required to sit for an hour watching someone waving their hands to no avail.

Sign language interpreted performances began in Seattle as early as 1981, at the Seattle Repertory, Intiman, and Empty Space theaters. These generally were interpreted in American Sign Language, following the recommendations of the Deaf Drama & Arts Project (DDA). The DDA was based at Seattle Central Community College, which received funds from the Seattle Arts Commission to hire interpreters for theatrical access. The DDA had an advisory board comprised of deaf and hard of hearing theatergoers. At a time when theaters did not provide funds to interpret each production, the advisory board voted which production would have the most appeal to the target audience, and chose the interpreters. As a service, the DDA published a monthly newsletter listing performances, the names of the interpreters, and a brief synopsis of the play. In some instances, the DDA worked with the theaters to develop a handout for the interpreted performance that would illustrate the sign names of each character.

In the mid 1980s, the Seattle Children's Theatre pioneered sign language interpretation in at least one of the main stage and children's weekday matinee performances of each production of the season, setting a trend that was followed by other Seattle theaters. Unfortunately, funding for the DDA stopped at the same time, and theaters continued to depend on community newsletter announcements and the deaf equivalent of word of mouth. Without the DDA, theaters used interns, or in some cases, an interpreter coordinator, to hire interpreters for a production. Generally, tickets to interpreted performances were sold at reduced cost, in an effort to build an audience. As theaters

renovated or moved to larger spaces, infrared-based assistive listening devices were installed, making plays accessible to those with mild to moderate hearing losses. On request, scripts would be provided.

Today, while almost every major theater has interpreted performances, these are often not well publicized.

A good number of people who are hearing-impaired have been exposed to the arts, including music, early in life, and have fond memories of these experiences. Wherever they could find the rare accommodation, members of this group would enjoy continued exposure to the arts. Senior citizens, on the other hand, are often bewildered by their progressive hearing loss, and are most often unaware of arts accommodation options available to them. Generally, because of the diminished capability to hear and converse, this group is the least likely to advocate for themselves in obtaining accommodations.

The deaf-blind face special challenges in access to the arts, which require assessment of individual needs and a lot of patience. Little is known about the preferences in this group, and more research needs to be conducted in this area.

People with Physical or Mobility Limitations

The international symbol most associated with access for people with disabilities consists of a stylized profile of a person in a wheelchair. Hindrances to access are called "barriers." It is no surprise that much of the terminology and symbolism associated with access for people with disabilities refers to mobility impairments. Why? Whether it is the broken bones of youth or the debilities of old age, most of us during the course of our lives will experience some sort of injury or condition that limits our mobility. This awareness may account for the fact that mobility impairments are the first thing we think about when the term "disability" comes up. According to 1991 statistics, approximately 9 million people in the U.S. are unable to walk a quarter of a mile without assistance. Nearly 1.5 million have partial or complete paralysis. There are 1,232,000 people with missing extremities, 1,400,000 who use wheelchairs, and 2 out of every 1,000 who have Cerebral Palsy. To accommodate the needs of this very diverse group is one of the bigger challenges for the arts presenter. Often the required accommodations are perceived as expensive. This is not necessarily the case as 75 percent to 80 percent of all accommodations cost organizations less than $500.

What constitutes mobility limitation? The *Disability Awareness Guide* published by VSA arts explains that "A broad range of disabilities have the effect of restricting independent movement or travel. Problems with mobility may result from spinal cord injury, arthritis, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, amputation, polio, stroke, breathing or stamina limitations, or other conditions."

Mobility problems "may take the form of paralysis, muscle weakness, nerve damage, stiffness of the joints, or lack of balance or coordination."

History of Arts Access for People with Physical or Mobility Limitations

People with physical or mobility limitations were the first to have their needs addressed through a Federal law. The Smith-Sears Act, the first effort at vocational preparation and placement for people with disabilities, was passed in 1918, as thousands of men with these types of disabilities returned from the trenches of World War I. The 1920 Vocational Rehabilitation Act for Civilians also addressed the issues of training for employment and job placement, but excluded the severely disabled and the blind. World War II helped prompt the Rehabilitation Act of 1943, which increased the number of disabilities covered under previous laws. While the civil rights of many American citizens were being codified in legislation throughout the 1960s, it was not until the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 that the rights of access to public accommodations for citizens with mobility limitations began to be addressed. The Architectural Barriers Act required that Federal buildings and those structures being built or renovated with Federal funds be accessible to people with disabilities. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 expanded the anti-discrimination provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include people with disabilities. When the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed by President Bush in 1990, it built upon previous civil rights legislation and extended "protections previously enacted by the federal government for women and racial, ethnic and religious minorities." Discrimination against people with disabilities is now illegal whether or not federal money is involved.

After ten years, some arts organizations are in compliance with the ADA, but others are not. Some groups are too small to make the required changes without facing serious financial hardship. Others are housed in historic buildings that cannot be modified without destroying some aspect of the historical character of the building or without great expense. Even so, these groups are required to have plans outlining what they intend to do if they eventually can afford renovations. They also must provide alternate accommodations so that people with disabilities can participate in their programs to the greatest extent possible. While enforcement of ADA requirements has been piecemeal due to the overburdened agencies given this responsibility, other means of encouraging compliance are being developed, including this pamphlet. Many arts funding organizations, particularly those receiving and disbursing federal funds, require ADA compliance as a condition for funding.

People with Blindness or Visual Impairment

Demographic information for blind and visually impaired people is sketchy at best. Thirty percent of blind and severely visually impaired residents of Washington State live in King County. They comprise 1.64 percent of the county's population. Two thirds of blind and visually impaired people are over 65 years old. Two percent are under 18. Seattle/King County serves as a cultural center for communities in surrounding counties, and this is true for blind and visually impaired people as well.

People lose vision for a great many reasons. Different conditions affect vision in very different ways. Tunnel vision, peripheral-only vision, clouded lenses (cataracts), short- and long-sightedness, bleeding or detached retinas, are just a few. Legal blindness is defined as corrected vision no better than 20/200, but varies in degree from there to total lack of sight. Very few blind people have been blind all their lives. Most have lost vision fairly late in life. Only about ten percent of blind people read Braille. A great many visually impaired people retain some useful vision.

History of Access to the Arts for the Community

Access to the arts for blind and visually impaired people was limited largely to literature for most of the twentieth century. The first regional library of Braille books opened in Seattle in 1906. The Radio Talking Book Service began in 1973, later becoming the present Evergreen Radio Reading Service. Braille and taping services began in 1975.

Programming on the Evergreen Radio Reading Service included book reviews offered on "Book World" starting in 1973. An entertainment guide began broadcasting in 1978. The guide divided into Eastern and Western Washington segments when the Reading Service began broadcasting statewide in 1986. "Publications Northwest" featured readings by local authors and literary news about books and writers.

Access to other forms of art developed momentum when the King County Arts Commission created the "Special Populations" category of its funding package in 1983. An advisory group called Committee on Arts and The Visually Impaired encouraged development of access programs for blind people. This group served as the test audience for the audio description service, which began with a grant from the Seattle Arts Commission under the "Forgotten Audiences" program in 1985. The Broadway Performance Hall administered this experimental project with the Intiman Theatre while it was in residence. Audio description operated under several sponsors until the non-profit corporation, Arts and Visually Impaired Audiences (AVIA), came into existence in 1991 and assumed the responsibility of running the service. With the passage of the

Americans with Disabilities Act, the number of theaters interested in offering audio description grew significantly. Currently audio description is available for about 35 productions per year in 6 different theaters in Seattle.

Single-event projects

AVIA has developed several projects since its formation, including guided descriptive tours, exhibits, and performances.

In 1992 AVIA provided a live described tour of Northwest Folklife's "Singers, Dancers, Dreamers, Travelers," an exhibit of Native American instruments, dance costumes and ceremonial objects. AVIA also provided a live described tour of Folklife's 1993 exhibit, "We are Polynesia," on May 22, 1993.

On April 10, 1993, AVIA presented "FestAVIA, a celebration of arts by and for visually impaired people" in Metro's Westlake Station, featuring performances and exhibits by visually impaired artists, and descriptive tours of public art in the Metro tunnel system. AVIA produced, in conjunction with Metro, "A Guide to the Metro Tunnel for Visually Impaired Travelers," available through Metro in Braille, large print and audiocassette.

In 1996, director Jane Kaplan worked under the joint sponsorship of AVIA, Seattle Children's Theatre and the Group Theatre to produce Antonio Buero-Vallejo's play, *In the Burning Darkness*. The project included visually impaired teenagers and young adults in all aspects of theatrical work. The play was set in a high school for blind students and debated universal questions of physical and metaphysical blindness.

Ongoing services

AVIA also provides a number of ongoing services to the visually impaired including audio description, a performance subscription service, a blind youth audio project, and event information.

Audio Description is a method of converting visual information into speech for live performances. During a performance, a live describer inserts what a visually impaired person in the audience needs to know to understand the action and get a sense of how the stage and the actors look. The listeners use a listening device to hear the describer's words. AVIA has a listening system, available for use by smaller venues without systems of their own. Audio descriptions include a pre-show tape describing the set and principle characters. Descriptions of the characters include short, recorded samples of their voices. Theaters with audio description include the 5th Avenue, A Contemporary Theatre, Intiman Theatre, The Seattle Children's Theatre, The Seattle Repertory Theatre, and the Fringe Festival.

The Package is by far AVIA's most frequently used service. This subscription service provides additional access for selected performances. For a single subscription price, a visually impaired subscriber gets a ticket for herself, and another for one companion at the same price, considerably lower than the standard ticket price. Service includes audio description and transportation to and from the theater. A coordinator is on hand at the theater to help people with seating, tickets, restrooms, and reconnecting with transportation after the show. The Package also brings groups to performances of the Seattle Symphony at Benaroya Hall and The Pacific Northwest Ballet's production of The Nutcracker. Responses to the service include comments like the following. "I facilitate four low vision support groups for seniors and this program has benefited many of our participants. Most of the people in these groups live alone and are on limited incomes. Having transportation, support at the theatre and a modest ticket price allows them access to an arts experience they could never attend otherwise. It also provides an opportunity for an outing and socialization with others, which is often a great benefit. You provide an excellent service for older adults with limited vision and I hope you continue and even expand the program." Carin Mack, MSW, Geriatric Specialist.

AVIA works with Jack Straw Productions and Washington Services for the Blind every summer to bring visually impaired high school students to Jack Straw's digital audio production facility. This Blind Youth Audio Project lets students work with professional engineers, producers, musicians, and coaches to learn about current recording and production techniques and create their own original programs.

The most frequently omitted form of access for blind and visually impaired patrons is access to information about events that have access. AVIA addresses this need with its information services. The Access Arts Line, 206-528-2085, is a voicemail call-in service with monthly bulletins on audio descriptions, The Package, current movies with descriptions, and related news about arts access. The same information reaches patrons directly in the AVIA Newsletter, mailed bi-monthly in Braille, large print, and E-mail formats.

Projects in development:

Washington Services for the Blind, Jack Straw Productions, and Arts and Visually Impaired Audiences are collaborating on a pioneering creative project for blind and visually impaired young writers. The Young Blind Writers Project aims to nurture and support new voices through creative writing workshops, individual project development, speech training, recordings, and visiting artists from the Jack Straw Writers Support Program.

Additional Access

The Pacific Northwest Ballet provides a backstage tour for the blind and visually impaired subscribers to The Package during which patrons can touch props, set pieces, and costumes, and talk to PNB staff and dancers. They can walk on the stage and experience the operation of the 30-foot mouse king puppet.

Washington Services for the Blind organizes groups of blind and visually impaired children to audio described performances at the Seattle Children's Theatre. After the performance, SCT staff take them onstage and backstage for guided "touch tours."

Cinerama and Pacific Place Cinemas in Seattle provide some first-run movies with a service called DVS Theatrical, which is a pre-recorded description, playing on listening devices during the movie. This service is a product of WGBH Boston, and is often available with a companion service for the hearing impaired, Rear Window Closed Captioning.

3. Seattle Arts Organizations' Responses to the ADA

What's Working

Currently, arts organizations in the Seattle area are implementing a variety of accessibility measures with varied degrees of success. The services offered include:

- wheelchair access and special seating for the physically impaired
- sign language interpreters and Sun Hydra infrared systems for the hearing impaired
- Braille programs and large print programs for the sight impaired
- audio description included in The Package subscription service

No single organization consistently offers all of these accommodations all of the time. Some offer combinations of these services. In all cases, the quality of access is highly dependent on advance notification. The more information the provider has in advance of the use of the service, the better that service is likely to be.

Wheelchair accessibility is the most consistently available service, although the exact nature of that accessibility can and does vary. Oftentimes, especially in newer buildings, an elevator is available to transport the audience member to upper floors. In older buildings, staff can manually assist the disabled audience member to his or her seat, but this is not a preferred option for either the arts presenter or the patron. Special seating areas, usually occupying a space freed by removing fixed seating, are often designated to accommodate wheelchairs. But these spaces do not always have adjacent seating for a fully-abled guest.

For the hearing and sight impaired, services are provided less consistently. They vary from one organization or venue to the next, and may be available only with advance notification and request. Some arts organizations offer a specific service such as sign language interpretation for a specifically identified performance date and time. Others offer a single service, such as infrared hearing devices, for the run of a production. These services and the designated performances may or may not be advertised as part of normal marketing efforts. This means that prospective patrons must initiate and explore the options themselves. Some arts organizations do consistently offer auxiliary services as part of their standard menu of audience options and advertise them as well.

What's Not Working

Concerns of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing

TTY Troubles

A common major complaint was the inability of arts venues to communicate via teletypewriters (TTY), which print received messages. Some arts organizations had a dedicated TTY line, but most often, the staff would never answer the TTY call, or if they did, would hang up because they did not know how to use a TTY. In many instances, the caller would hang up in frustration, and call again via the relay service, only to hang up again because the box office "was too busy." This would also be the case with arts organizations that have a TTY but not a dedicated line. Staff that are the first point of contact with arts patrons on the telephone are generally not trained to converse with deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing customers.

Poor Interpreter Placement

By far the most common complaint was the placement of the interpreter. Most often they are at the far left corner of the stage, away from the line of sight to the stage action. One focus group member said, "I feel like I have to have my eyes split to see the interpreter and what is happening on the stage at the same time." Other times, the interpreters are on the same level as the audience, making it difficult for many to see the interpreter's signs. Inexplicably, in some theaters, non-hearing impaired patrons are placed directly in front of the interpreters, angering both deaf and non-deaf alike.

Lack of Ticket Price Choice

Another recurring complaint was the cost of theater tickets. Some theaters charge the full-price of the seats that are in front of the interpreter or the stage (for those hard of hearing persons that depend on lipreading), though these patrons have no other choice of seats from which to watch the sign language interpreters or lipread actors. Cost is an important factor for the inexperienced or new theater-goer.

Lack of Publicity

Focus group members were puzzled by the lack of publicity and marketing by arts organizations. They often do not find out about interpreted performances until a few days before the performance, if at all, and cannot change plans. Art museums will accommodate requests, but do little to inform the public of their willingness to do so. The Seattle Opera has supratitles for productions in a foreign language, but does not take the opportunity to cultivate a deaf and hard of hearing audience around that service. There are few resources for publicity, other than the Community Service Center for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing's GA

newsletter, which publicizes a monthly listing of interpreted events. Some arts organizations seem to not even bother to inform the community of scheduled interpreted events.

Interpreters' Skill

The theme of quality was important in the focus group's discussion of interpreters. One participant pointed out that she makes it a practice to find out the interpreters' names for a production. If these interpreters are not skilled in theatrical interpreting, she will not attend the production. Some theaters hire interpreter coordinators who are well versed in how to match the type of play to the available pool of interpreters. Other participants noted that some interpreters seemed to be unprepared and "winging it," which greatly affects their comprehension and enjoyment of the play.

Infrared Systems' Limitations

For hard of hearing patrons using assistive listening devices, a common complaint was the use of infrared systems by theaters. These, according to a focus group member, were designed for those with mild hearing impairments. When on its loudest volume, the Walkman-like earpieces emit noise and often elicited dirty stares from persons seated nearby. In addition, the system's dependence on receiving a direct infrared signal is prone to blockage, especially when someone shifts in their seat in front of the patron using the infrared system. In addition, these systems are unable to be used with hearing aids, reducing the number of patrons able to benefit from their use.

Concerns of People with Physical or Mobility Limitations

Patrons attending arts venues or events arrive with certain expectations. They expect to find a place to park, usable bathroom facilities, a choice of ticket prices, and a selection of good seating. If they come with a friend or relative, they want to have the opportunity to sit together. They expect to be able to enter the venue or event without difficulty and move around in public areas without impediment. If any of these expectations are not going to be met, they want to be informed of this ahead of time. People with physical disabilities are no different.

Access begins before the ticket is purchased

Focus group participants brought up several problems associated with communication. Many get their information about cultural events from the same sources as anyone else—newspapers, radio, or box office staff. According to the focus group, these media seldom provide information about access. Focus group participants also brought up examples of box office employees who could not provide information about accessible seating options or who provided

incorrect information. One mentioned a situation where a venue chose not to use standard signage indicating wheelchair parking, making it difficult to find.

If they can't get to the door, they can't get in the door

Many focus group participants still confront problems with parking. Problems mentioned included a lack of accessible parking and parking which was either inconvenient or dangerous. Participants mentioned distance between the parking area and venue (a problem for people who do not use wheelchairs but experience pain or fatigue when walking distances), and the illogical location of accessible parking relative to accessible entrances as inconveniences. Participants brought up occasions when the route from parking to venue was either difficult (too far away, slopes or ramps were too steep) or unsafe (required crossing busy vehicular traffic lanes). Parking that is sheltered from the elements with a covered route from parking to venue was considered ideal.

Seating

This was the biggest issue raised by this focus group. Problems mentioned were uninformed box office staff; seating which isolated the person in a wheelchair from non-disabled companions; seating which "corralled" all wheelchair users in a particular place; placement of wheelchair seating in theaters where patrons cannot enjoy the quadraphonic or surround sound effects or where the view is bad; seating right up front where patrons must strain their necks looking up the whole time; seating all the way to one side where patrons have to turn their necks to one side for the whole show (in both cases, limited mobility exaggerates the same discomforts suffered by non-disabled patrons who can at least shift around a bit); sloped floors which force wheelchair users to sit leaning forward for the whole show; cramped seating/limited leg room which resulted in knee pain; tight seating which makes it difficult for people with limited mobility to get up to use the bathroom; wheel chair seating placed in a draughty location (it is common for people with mobility limitations to have reduced circulation, making extremes of temperature a bigger problem for them); lack of choices in seating prices or seating location; wheelchair seating sold to non-disabled patrons before wheelchair users have a chance to reserve them; not being able to camp out over night or wait in line for 3 hours to get tickets for those sell-out shows; poor views from flat floor seating; and the vagaries of festival (unreserved, first come/first served) seating.

When you gotta go .....

Lack of accessible bathrooms, and bathrooms which are only partially accessible were important concerns of the focus group participants. This was most often a problem in older facilities, but even more recent construction often lacks a strap or a handle that people with limited hand function can use to close a cubicle door behind them.

Other facility issues

Facilities that provide access need maintenance, too. One focus group participant mentioned the difficulties caused by a broken elevator.

Access to the stage

This focus group included two performing artists. Problems discussed included access to stages (performers with physical disabilities often face stairs to the stage even in generally accessible venues) and the lack of accessible bathrooms and dressing rooms backstage. On those infrequent occasions when audience members are invited to be on the stage, lack of access to the stage makes a part of the performance inaccessible to patrons with disabilities. The aforementioned performers and other focus group participants talked about their difficulty negotiating crowds during big arts festivals.

If we build it, will they come?

One recently-built facility was singled out for mention as having such ill-conceived access that the focus group participant ended her membership with the organization. Large arts organizations have been known to spend millions of dollars on new facilities or renovations, confident in the knowledge that they are hiring the best, most knowledgeable architects and contractors, reassured by these parties that "of course" they know how to design and build to the ADA code, only to find out their trust was misplaced.

Good taste and courtesy cannot be legislated, but...

Festival seating generally doesn't work for people with physical disabilities. In our day and age, it's too much to expect that other patrons will give up an aisle seat just because it's the only one accessible for a person in a wheel chair or to stay seated because they know the person behind them cannot stand up. Focus group members tended to avoid situations where there was no reserved seating, and those that tried to attend such events had some horror stories to tell.

Concerns of People with Blindness or Visual Impairment

Blind and visually impaired consumers of the arts find themselves facing a number of difficulties unique to them and their disability. It's important to note that The Package subscription service has been created to address these needs.

Transportation is a Struggle

Once they have decided to attend an arts event, blind and visually impaired people then must deal with the problem of transportation. Not all visually impaired people can depend on friends or relatives for rides. The arts event may be located in a place which is hard to reach by bus. Taxicabs are expensive and can be unreliable. Access Vans must be scheduled weeks in advance. Often, the problem of getting to the event must be solved all over again to get home.

One focus group participant explained that though, "I tend to be pretty independent," when faced with having to negotiate two different bus routes late at night after a performance, "Sometimes I'd rather stay home I think."

Navigating the Facility

Once at the event, visually impaired people face the problems of finding the entrance, getting tickets, finding seats and restrooms, navigating through milling crowds, negotiating stairs, standing in concession lines and avoiding architectural overhangs. "Once I get to the theater how do I find my place? I mean that is a real problem," one participant noted.

Limited Audio Description Performances

Events that offer audio description provide the service only for scheduled performances. Visually impaired people may wish to use the service, but cannot because of schedule conflicts. "It's enough that we could set aside time in our lives anyway to go, much less have to get specific about the time, and so that's kind of a drawback to going to specific performances." Theaters that provide audio description often do not mention the service in their promotional literature, or do not include audio description dates. Box office and subscription staff are often unfamiliar with the service and are unable to answer questions. "I was really considering buying season tickets, because I love their plays, but it wasn't listed on there when the audio described plays were going to be, and so I felt really hesitant buying for the season, but not knowing when they were. . ."

Technical Difficulties

A visually impaired person who has solved the transportation problem, gotten to an audio described performance, and arrived at her seat, may then discover that her receiver is not working properly. Technical difficulties are extremely frustrating. "The headsets were experiencing some difficulty with coil reception. I don't know if the person doing the describing was too far away, or what, but you could just barely hear the audio description, and I found it to be more distracting and irritating, so I took them off," one participant said. Another noted that "Right when the chandelier fell, my headset stopped working, and the person I was with had to take my headset, go back, exchange my headset, bring it back, and then climb over the people to get back to the seat, so it was really irritating."

Being Welcome

Blind and visually impaired people are aware when a presenter goes to some effort to make them welcome and comfortable. "They seem a little happier to have you there, a little more like they're not being put out when you ask for room for your guide dog and things like that. I don't think I had a bad experience at (theater name), but I think it was queer that they just didn't seem like they had had as much exposure to blind people. "

Concerns of Arts Presenters

Seattle's arts organizations recognize that they provide inconsistent access to services for disabled arts patrons. They also recognize that this inconsistency reduces their potential audience from the disabled communities. A number of factors, however, inhibit their implementing well-designed accessible programs. These include:

- the cost of renovating an outdated physical space
- the challenge of meeting access requirements in a rented venue
- the range of needs amongst the disabled population
- the cost, and payback, of outreach to special populations above and beyond normal targeted audience development
- the factors outside an arts organization's efforts which affect attendance, such as transportation
- the loss of other revenue sources

Cost of Renovations

Seattle recently has been blessed with the construction of several major new buildings designed to house some of our larger arts organizations. As these buildings are designed, physical accessibility is built into their construction budgets. But many smaller, grass roots organizations are housed in buildings constructed long before ADA was adopted. Oftentimes, these organizations don't own a facility; if they are lucky, they have a long-term lease. If not, the lease is for the run of a single production. The cost of renovating and improving physical space usually is beyond the ability of a smaller arts organization barely making ends meet. Grants are often unavailable for improving leased or rented space.

Range of Needs

The focus group participants stressed that arts presenters need to recognize that not all individuals have the same kind or degree of disability, nor do they necessarily need the same kind or degree of service. Providing a full range of services to ensure an equally meaningful arts experience for all audience members would be costly for any arts presenter. Patron A with a minimal sight disability may want a more limited version of a program whose design fits well with Patron B who has a more intense form of the disability. How can an organization, whose primary focus is the presentation of art, create a high quality arts experience for the disabled patron when the spectrum can be so vast?

Marketing Challenges

Marketing to the disabled community on the surface seems to embody the same issues as marketing to any target audience, but there are added dimensions. To make the patron aware a service is being provided, effective and meaningful

materials must be prepared and distributed. Promoting in Braille, large print, and on tape to the sight-disabled community implies additional expense. The arts presenter must raise the funds necessary to cover the additional cost of staff, publication and distribution of these materials above and beyond normal marketing efforts.

Return on Investment

Arts presenters face a very real dilemma created by too few dollars to cover a wide range of needs. The arts community has been facing diminishing funding with increasing demand. These arts organizations, which are non-profit, are being asked to operate more and more like the for-profit sector. Their bottom line becomes paramount. Accessibility translates into very real costs, including physical upgrades, staffing, and marketing. Organizations look at return on investment and have few options for ongoing support for special initiatives such as accessibility. When services are provided but underutilized, there is no payback. The cost and payback of outreach to special populations is of special concern to arts organizations. Arts organizations are faced with having to create specialized marketing materials for each of the different disabled communities. Targeted marketing earns its return in increased audience development from that target group. One participant mentioned that, "Just in the last six months I've gotten calls from five theaters throughout the United State, asking what the size of our audience is ... for the signed performance, and for audio description. The common thing from all those people was that they couldn't reach that audience either, though they were reaching out, and trying to find out how to get to those audiences. I just wanted to say that it's not just Seattle, its pretty much United States wide."

Outside Factors

Multiple factors outside an arts organization's focus also impact attendance. Beyond building familiarity with the basic services available, arts organizations must overcome the expectation disabled individuals have that there remain too many barriers to their enjoyment of arts events. Many disabled individuals are tired of less than pleasant treatment (by staff as well as fully-abled audience members), less than adequate services (bathrooms as well as interpretive devices), and less than adequate consideration given to logistics (how do they get to an event; who do they go with). Many disabled individuals have decided that it is just easier to stay at home. Marketing cannot always offset these issues.

4. Arts Enabled Solutions

Solutions for Arts Presenters

Work Together

The arts organization representatives in the arts enabled focus groups all agreed that the more they work together the better their response will be to their disabled audiences. Sharing information on quality service, technology, and marketing/outreach could help educate arts organizations on realistic and relevant responses to the disabled community. Any possible sharing of technical assistance and expertise would be invaluable. By taking advantage of the access provider experts already working for the disabled communities, arts presenters can get immediate help and not have to become accessibility experts themselves. Working together to provide centralized information on Seattle-based accessible arts events would greatly assist disabled audiences. If this included a web site for distributing that information, arts organizations could then add and update information as needed. Such a site could provide information on activities, accommodation for disabled audiences, contacts, ticket prices, and other general issues.

Proactive Attitude

Whether or not an organization has any money to improve access, an accommodating attitude is the place to start. More than once, a focus group participant mentioned access problems at a particular venue only when prompted or as an afterthought because they had been so impressed with the way staff and management handled their needs when these needs were made known. If the attitude is one of "within our means, we will do everything we can to make our offerings accessible - let us know what you need" then some people with disabilities will feel welcome even to the most inaccessible fringe theater production. If the attitude is "we don't really need your patronage and don't really want to be bothered to accommodate you" then people with disabilities will stay home even from events they would dearly love to attend. "I'd just like to see the people who are coordinating the arts access to be more proactive and less reactive," said one disabled participant. "It's hard for people to continually beat their heads against the wall; we don't want to do that anymore, we want the (arts organizations) to be more proactive." A well-informed staff, experienced in working courteously and efficiently with visually, hearing, or mobility impaired consumers, is an invaluable form of human access.

Maintain Existing Accessible Facilities

Which is cheaper, fixing the elevator or moving the event to another location? If an organization hasn't done one it may be forced to do the other. If a presenter

is renting its space, both it and its landlord are responsible for ADA compliance. When looking for affordable arts space, arts presenters can make accessibility one of their criteria.

Often simple, inexpensive upgrades can solve accessibility problems. For example, a frequent request from people who use wheelchairs is for a handle or strap to be affixed to the inside of a cubicle door, which will allow a person with limited hand strength to close the door behind them.

Other accessibility hints include renting portable ramps, lifts and other items to afford access to people with disabilities for events in otherwise inaccessible spaces. Festivals presenters could provide scooters or trams for transportation and for moving equipment, either free or for rent.

Ways to improve seating accessibility include:

- Install moveable armrests to make exits or bathroom breaks easier
- Provide wheelchair seating within each seating section
- Use removable seating to allow wheelchair users to sit anywhere in the facility
- Provide a separate phone number or extension for customers to order wheelchair seating (provide wheelchair users with some sort of account number to discourage cheating)
- Reserve wheelchair seats for wheelchair users until just before the performance
- Require that patrons sitting in front of wheelchair seating not remain standing during performances
- Provide powered wheelchair seating platforms that rise to the level of people who are standing (this was done in the Kingdome, and is a very popular element for wheelchair users attending sporting events)

Improved Publicity

All focus group members agreed that publicity for accessible arts events needs to be improved. They want to know which events are accessible. They do not want to experience a non-accessible event. One participant said she does not want to go to events unless she knows they are accessible, "I have never gone to a place to get a slap in the face. If there aren't accessible provisions, I don't go." Participants would prefer to get accessible arts information in one comprehensive location. Improved methods for publicity include:

- Better use of the newsletter serving the deaf community, the GA (published by CSCDHH)
- An arts newsletter specifically for the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing
- Information posted on the Internet via a web page aimed at the deaf and hard of hearing

- VSA arts' on-line, searchable data-base of accessible arts organizations and events
- AVIA's accessible event advertisements to the blind and visually impaired on the Access Arts Line (523-2085)
- Advertising on radio or televisions shows that focus on disability issues
- Including parking information on info-lines along with other access information.
- Including access information in event advertising by using the international disability symbols

Improving Sign Interpreted Performances

Focus group participants suggested that interpreters for the hearing impaired be fluent in interpretation; practice the play beforehand; work well with other interpreters; have the skill to capture the theatrical qualities of a character; clearly mouth words as they sign; have a passion for the theater and for interpreting. Interpreters should be located towards the center of the stage so that the viewers can see both the stage and the interpreter. Using shadow and other forms of innovative stage interpretation methods should be tried. "It (shadow interpreting) was incredible. A lot of that was because there were deaf people who were being used as interpreters. It was great because we used the same language "

Appropriate seating near the interpreters should be provided with clear sight lines towards the interpreters and simultaneously, towards the actors on stage. Appropriate lighting of the interpreters is needed, whether on or off stage, to aid in comprehension of signs. Theaters should offer signed English interpreted performances, in addition to American Sign Language interpreted performances.

If funding were available, a coordinator of interpreted plays would be a great asset. This person would be responsible for matching and hiring appropriate interpreters, and publicizing interpreted performances.

Subscription Packages

Another successful approach is AVIA's The Package, a subscription package for the blind and visually impaired. The Package provides transportation and trained volunteers who assist people from their vehicles to their seats and back again. A local arts presenter noted that The Package performance, "was our largest group, and a really relaxed group as a result of knowing that they were being taken care of from the beginning to the end."

Some focus group participants suggested a season ticket series to a variety of accessible arts performances. Others suggested that costs be kept as minimal as possible to attract and cultivate a new audience. Deaf and hard of hearing

patrons would like the costs of front of the house seats to view the interpreters or to lipread performers to be no more than the cost of the least expensive seat in the house.

TTY Training

Box office staff should be trained and retrained on the use of TTYs, whether or not they are connected to a dedicated line. Box office staff should also become familiar with the TTY relay service and use it accordingly. Callers who are TTY users should be treated the same as non-TTY users, and served in turn. TTY users should not reach an answering machine during normal business hours, and be told that someone will call back.

Advisory Groups from Disabled Communities

Advisory groups from disabled communities could help arts presenters get the inside information they need to make their events accessible while simultaneously building a dedicated audience. A Deaf advisory group could assist in selecting interpreters appropriate for performances. As one disabled participant said, "I think we need a voice and right now I don't think we have a voice." The advisory group would be able to help plan programs, new buildings, or renovations.

Better Assistive Listening Devices

Focus group members who prefer assistive listening devices suggested that theaters look into FM loop systems, which are able to connect to hearing aids equipped with magnetic coils (T-switch). This would open access to a wider group of hard of hearing individuals.

More Captioning

Deaf and hard of hearing patrons would benefit from supratitles at English language operas. Rear-window captioning technology, now in the early stages of acceptance for movie theatres, may have possible application to theatrical productions.

Better Programs and More Available Scripts

Programs and other literature in large print and Braille go a long way toward improving access for all sorts of events.

Providing scripts on a loan basis to deaf and hard of hearing patrons would be well received. One focus group participant reported that one major theatre company charges patrons for the cost of copying the script. In addition, scripts provided should be the ones used in the production; when a line is excised, it causes confusion for those who read the script while watching a production.

Making Arts Lectures Accessible

A few participants noted that they would attend educational events related to the content of a play or exhibit if they were advertised as accessible, or knew that

the arts organization would welcome calls from persons wanting such events to what they saw on stage; having the ability to understand the content of the play would encourage patrons to return to the theatre.

Keep Front of House Staff Trained on Accessibility
While some people with disabilities don't like to have a fuss made over them, it seems better to err on the side of service. This begins with knowledgeable people in the box office and continues with personal service on the part of security staff or ushers.

Hire people with disabilities
Arts presenters could actively recruit people with disabilities to be involved at all levels of the arts organization - artists, technicians, administrators, backstage, box office, front-of-house personnel and volunteers.

Use Audio Description
Blind and visually impaired people who have experienced description find it to be a useful form of access to the arts. Audio description of theatrical performances is the most widely known and available form, but description is also helpful in understanding exhibitions, public art, dance, video and film. "I saw *Fiddler on the Roof* which was not audio described, and then went to the audio described one," one participant said, "and I was just amazed at how much I had missed before and what a difference it made. I really felt like I'd seen it after attending the audio described one."

Learning More about Arts Enabled and ADA Compliance
There are programs provided by various organizations that train people in how to make facilities accessible according to the ADA or to assess facilities or programs to determine if they comply with the ADA. In Washington state a few of these are the Governor's Committee on Disabilities and Employment Issues (GCDE), the Washington Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (WCCD), and VSA arts' Cultural Access Monitors Program. Arts presenters can take advantage of ADA training opportunities for staff and administration. The WCCD and the GCDE are good places to find trainers.

There is a lot of employee turnover in arts organizations. It is important that someone become knowledgeable about access issues who will either be around for a while or who can be relied upon to pass their knowledge on to others.

Solutions for Disabled Patrons

Arts organizations recommended several things that disabled patrons can do to help presenters improve the services patrons receive.

be accessible. Often, they attend a play that is accessible, but feel unsure of

Call Ahead
Each representative participating in the focus group discussion emphasized that the quality of service provided was improved, sometimes dramatically, because they knew the audience member was coming and what specific assistance was needed. With this knowledge in hand, the organization could prepare, insuring both equipment and adequate staff were on hand to provide the assistance needed. The service was available more quickly and more pleasantly upon arrival of the audience member.

Be Clear
When disabled patrons are clear about the type and level of service needed, arts organizations can respond more effectively. An audience member who is restricted to the use of a wheelchair should not purchase a ticket for a regular seat. It is not fair to anyone to do so and then expect to be able to transfer seating to the wheelchair accessible space, which might already have been sold or reserved.

Be Polite
Organization staff is there to help. Past experience and past frustrations in other situations often are inappropriately vented on staff. Doing so is not only unfair to those trying to help but often complicates the situation.

Provide Feedback
Meaningful improvement often is possible if an organization is aware of a problem. Change won't happen if an organization thinks all is well. Positive, constructive feedback is always best. The best feedback is specific about what should be done, and explains why the change is important. A 'pat-on-the-back' is just as important as a recommendation for change.

Encourage Follow-up
One focus group participant suggested that all interested parties need to encourage the Seattle, King County, and Washington State arts commissions to follow-up on grants and make sure that organizations are providing the access they say they are to patrons with disabilities.

5. Access Resources

Sponsor Organizations

Arts and Visually Impaired Audiences (AVIA)
AVIA provides access services for visually impaired people to arts events, and runs projects that support artistic expression by the blind and visually impaired.
332 17th Avenue E.
Seattle, WA 98112-5107
(206) 323-7190
E-mail: aviaboss@aol.com

Community Service Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CSCDHH)
The mission of CSCDHH is to provide services, support and advocacy to Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind.
1609 19th Avenue
Seattle WA. 98122
Voice / TTY (206) 322-4996
FAX (206) 720-3251
http://www.cscdhh.org/

Jack Straw Productions (JSP)
JSP makes its audio recording and production facility available as a community resource for artists, organizations, and schools. JSP also operates programs to help disabled, ethnic, and at-risk populations.
4261 Roosevelt Way NE
Seattle, WA 98105
Voice: (206) 634-0919
http:/www.jackstraw.org
E-mail: jsp@jackstraw.org

King County Arts Commission
506 2nd Ave., Rm 200
Seattle, WA 98104-2307
Voice: (206) 296-7580

Seattle Arts Commission
312 1st Avenue N, 2nd Flr
Seattle, WA 98109
Voice: (206) 684-7171
http://www.cityofseattle.net/arts/

VSA arts of Washington
VSA arts of Washington is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing arts opportunities by, for, and with persons with disABILITIES.

305 Harrison
Seattle, WA 98109
Voice/TTY: (206) 443-1843
http://bartok.vsarts.org/washington/

General Resources

A Contemporary Theater
Voice: (206) 292-7660
http://www.acttheatre.org

Access Arts Line
A voicemail call-in service with monthly bulletins about accessible Northwest art events.
206-528-2085

Accessibility Resource Center
An NEA Website with helpful Arts Enabled links and articles
http://www.arts.endow.gov/partner/Accessibility/AccessMap.html

Association for Theatre and Accessibility
ATA identifies itself as a coalition of people with and without disabilities in all aspects of theatre whether it be in training, production or performance or who work with individuals with disabilities in professional, educational or recreational settings.
C/o National Arts and Disability Center
UCLA University Affiliated Program
300 UCLA Medical Plaza Ste. 3330
Los Angeles, California 90095-6967
(310) 794-1141
http://ata.ucla.edu/

AT&T
(800) 833-3232
Voice/TTY (201) 489-7889

Best Manufacturing Company
(for General access and Braille signs)
1202 N. Park Ave.,
Montrose, CO" 81401-3170.
(800) 235-2378.

Center for Independence
407 14th Ave. S.E.
Puyallup, WA 98372.
Voice/TDD: (206) 848-6661

Coalition of Handicapped Organizations
P.O. Box 2129.
Vancouver, WA 98668-2129.
Voice: (206) 693-8819. TDD: (206) 693-8835.

Communications Accommodation Project
Washington D.C.
(202) 651-5343

Disabilities Law Project
1524 Queen Anne North. Seattle, WA 98109.
Voice/TDD: (206) 284-9733.

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Washington D.C.
(800) 466-4232

Everett Coalition People with Disabilities
1301 Hewett. Everett, WA 98201.
Voice: (206) 252-6456

Hands On
A New York based service organization dedicated to providing greater accessibility to arts and cultural events for the Deaf and hard of hearing.
Sign Interpreted Performances, Inc.
20 West 20th St., 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10011
TTY: (212) 822-8548
Voice: (212) 822-8550
Fax: (212) 822-8548
http://handson.org/handson.html

Independent Lifestyle Services
306 North Main St. Ellensburg, WA 98926.
Voice: (509) 962-9620

Independent Living Center Northwest
2600 South Walker. Seattle, WA 98144.
Voice/TDD: (206) 328-1403.

Intiman Theater
Voice: (206) 269-1901

Job Accommodation Network
A free service that explains to organizations how to find easy solutions to ADA compliance.
West Virginia University
P.O. Box 6080

Morgantown, WV 26506-6080
(800) 526-7234

Known Research
(TDDs)
(800) 833-4968

Meany Hall at the University of Washington
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195
Voice: (206) 543-4882

National Arts and Disability Center
The National Arts and Disability Center (NADC) is an information, resource, and training center dedicated to promoting the full inclusion of persons with disabilities into the visual-, performing, literary- and media arts communities. The NADC provides technical assistance to assist arts organizations to comply with the ADA.
300 UCLA Medical Plaza, Ste. 3310
Los Angeles, CA 90095-6967
Voice: (310) 794-1141
Fax: (310) 794-1143
http://nadc.ucla.edu/ADA&Arts.html

National Endowment for the Arts Office for AccessAbility
The National Endowment for the Arts' Office for AccessAbility was established in 1976 as the advocacy-technical assistance arm of the Arts Endowment for people with disabilities, older adults, veterans, and people living in institutions.
Office for AccessAbility, Partnership
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20506
TTY: (202) 682-5496
Voice: (202) 682-5532
Fax: (202) 682-5613
http://www.arts.endow.gov/partner/Accessibility/Brochure.html

Northwest Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center
The Northwest Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (NWDBTAC) provides information, technical assistance and training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to all people with rights and responsibilities under the law. NWDBTAC is one of ten regional centers in the United States specifically designated to assist with the dissemination of information about the ADA. The state partners participating in this venture are Access Alaska, the Idaho Task Force on the ADA, Independent Living Resources of Oregon and the Washington Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment.

NWDBTAC
PO Box 9046
Olympia, WA 98507-9046
Voice & TTY: (800) 949-4232
http://www.wata.org/NWD/

Seattle Center
Seattle, WA 98109
Voice: (206) 684-7330

Seattle Children's Theatre
2nd N & Thomas
Seattle, WA 98109
Voice: (206) 443-0807
TDD: (206) 728-1638

Seattle Public Library
Library Equal Access Project (LEAP)
1000 4th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104-1193
(206) 386-4690 (voice and TTY)

Seattle Repertory Theatre
155 Mercer St.
Seattle, WA 98109
Voice: (206) 443-2210

Tacoma Area Coalition of Individuals with Disabilities
6315 S. 19th St.
Tacoma, WA 98466-6217
Voice/TDD: (206) 564-9000

The ADA Technical Assistance Center
Washington Governor's Committee
Olympia, WA
(800) 435-7232

The Job Accommodation Network.
A free service that explains to organizations how to find easy solutions to ADA compliance.
West Virginia University
PO Box 6080
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080
(800) 526-7234
http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/

UltraTec
(TDDs)
(800) 233-9130

Village Theatre
303 Front N
Issaquah, WA 98027
Voice: (425) 392-1942

VSA arts
VSA arts is an international organization that creates learning opportunities through the arts for people with disabilities. The organization offers arts-based programs in creative writing, dance, drama, music and the visual arts implemented primarily through our vast affiliate network in 41 states and the District of Columbia and 86 international affiliates in 83 countries. VSA arts' programs now serve 4.3 million Americans and 1.3 million people in other parts of the world.
1300 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036
(800) 933-8721 Toll Free Voice
(202) 737-0725 Fax;
(202) 737-0645 TDD
http://www.vsarts.org/

Washington Coalition of Citizens with DisAbilities
4649 Sunnyside N., Suite 100
Seattle, WA 98103
(206) 545-7055

Weitbrecht Communications
(Flashers, door knock signals)
Santa Monica, CA
Voice/TDD: (800) 233-9130.

Resources for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf
8719 Colesville Rd., Suite 310
Silver Spring, MD 20910.
(301) 608-0050.

Sign Language Associates
Silver Spring, MD
(301) 588-7591

Resources for People with Physical or Mobility Limitations

Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association
78-80 Astoria Blvd.
Jackson Heights, NY 11370.
(718) 803-3782

Paralyzed Veterans of America
Washington D.C.
(202) 872-1300

Resources for People with Blindness or Visual Impairment

American Foundation for the Blind
Washington D.C.
(202) 223-0101

American Printing House for the Blind
Louisville, KY.
(502) 895-2405

Associated Services for the Blind
(215) 627-0600

Braille Institute
Los Angeles
(213) 663-1111

Clovernook Opportunities for the Blind
Cincinnati.
(513) 522-3860

Community Services for the Blind and Partially Sighted
9709 Third Avenue, NE, #100
Seattle, WA 98115-2027
Phone: (206) 525-5556 or (800) 458-4888
Fax: (206) 525-0422
E-mail: csbps@csbps.com
http://www.csbps.com & www.sightconnection.com

Lighthouse for the Blind
2501 S. Plum Street
PO Box C-14119
Seattle, WA 98114
(206) 324-1388

Low Vision Information and Referral
1-888-331-7007
http://www.walovision.org

National Braille Press
Boston, MA
(617) 266-6160

National Federation of the Blind
Baltimore, MD
(301) 659-9314

National Federation of the Blind, Seattle Chapter
PO Box 2516
Seattle, WA 98111

United Blind of Seattle
c/o Peggy Shoel
5171 S Spenser Street
Seattle, WA 98118
(206) 722-5406

Vision and Independent Living Services
2400 Queen Street.
Bellingham, WA 98226.
Voice: (206) 647-0309

Washington Council of the Blind
1503 5th Avenue W.
Seattle, WA 98119
1-800-255-1147
http://www.acb.org/wcb/

Washington State Services for the Blind
3411 S Alaska Street
Seattle, WA 98118
(206)721-4422
http://www.wa.gov/dsb/index.html

Washington Talking Book and Braille Library and the Evergreen Radio Reading Service
2021 9th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98121
Phone: (206) 615-0400

Publications

The Accessible Museum
Published jointly with the American Association or Museums and the Institute of Museum Services, 1993. Profiles programs that are access models in 19 museums Available for $35.00 to members and $40.00 nonmembers
From the American Association for Museums Bookstore, 1575 Eye Street, NW, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20005, (202) 289-9127(3).

Americans with Disabilities Act Document Center
ADA Statute, Regulations, ADAAG (Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines), Federally Reviewed Tech Sheets, and Other Assistance Documents
http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/kinder/index.htm

Adapt to a Better Design
Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association, 78-80 Astoria Blvd., Jackson Heights, NY 11370. (718) 803-3782

The Americans with Disabilities Act: Removing Barriers in Places of Public Accommodation
Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association, 78-80 Astoria Blvd., Jackson Heights, NY 11370. (718) 803-3782

The Arts and 504 Handbook
Government Printing Office, Updated in 1992.
Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. 20402.
Priced at only $6.50, this book is the way to go for individuals or organizations on a tight budget, for those who are visual learners (there are lots of illustrations), and for those who might be overwhelmed by the size of its big brother - Design for Accessibility (see below). It is currently out of print, but was available from the local library system (Seattle). Although the version reviewed (printed in 1985) uses outdated terminology, this book provides clear, concise information and may, in many cases, be all the administrator of a small arts organization needs

Design for Accessibility: An Arts Administrator's Guide
National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and the National Endowment for the Arts, July 1994
Enormous and expensive ($60.00 for non-profits, $90.00 for others), this is an essential resource for large arts venues and presenting organizations. This is a detailed resource guide on accessibility and the visual, performing, literary, and media arts. It includes information on such topics as: laws and legislation, employment, funding, how to evaluate an organizations physical and program accessibility, access education, access language and communication, public

information, and outreach. Not available in the Seattle library system as of 1998. A list of organizations in your state that have this publication may be available from your state arts commission. Available from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 1010 Vermont Ave. NW, Suite 920, Washington, D.C. 20005, (202) 347-6352

Designing Accessible Programs for Museums
Reviews readily available and published information in regards to museum accessibility.
National Arts and Disability Center
300 UCLA Medical Plaza, Suite 3310, Los Angeles, CA 90095-6967
http://nadc.ucla.edu/DesigningAccessiblePrograms.htm

Disabilities Access Symbols Project
A package of 12 major access symbols to help organizations advertise their accessible programs and facilities. These may be downloaded from the Graphic Artists Guild Foundation web site at http://www.gag.org, ordered on Mac or IBM formatted disks, or ordered as camera-ready slicks. The cost is $12.95 plus $3.00 shipping and handling. Graphic Artists Guild Foundation, 90 John St., Suite 403, New York, NY 10038, (212) 347-6352 or FAX (212) 791-0333

Large Room Listening Systems for Hard of Hearing People
Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, 7800 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, MD 29814. (301) 657-4112

Audio Induction Loops
Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, 7800 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, MD 29814. (301) 657-4112

Open or closed-captioning put onto videotape
The Caption Center, WGBH Educational Foundation, Boston, MA. (617) 492-2777

People With Disabilities Explain It All For You: Your Guide to the Public Accommodations Requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act
edited by Mary Johnson and the Editors of *The Disability Rag*, The Avocado Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1992

What is Real-Time Captioning and How Can I Use It?
Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, 7800 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, MD 29814. (301) 657-4112